

## INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNITY INDICATORS

### WHAT IS A GOOD INDICATOR?

Good indicators are objective measurements that reflect how a community is doing. They reveal whether key community attributes are going up or down; forward or backward; getting better, worse, or staying the same. Effective indicators meet the following criteria:

- reflect the fundamental factors which determine long-term regional health
- can be easily understood and accepted by the community
- are statistically measurable on a frequent basis
- measure outcomes, rather than inputs.

### WHY ARE COMMUNITY INDICATORS IMPORTANT?

The value of community indicators is to provide balanced measurements of the factors which contribute to sustaining community vitality and a healthy economy, including economic, social, quality of life, and environmental measurements. They also provide a picture of the County's overall social, and economic health over time. The narrative for each community indicator defines why the indicator is important to the community and measures community progress.

### SELECTION CRITERIA

The indicators selected for inclusion in the *Orange County Community Indicators Report* represent broad interests and trends in Orange County and are comparable to indicator efforts in similar communities throughout the nation.

The indicators that were selected also meet the following specific criteria:

- illustrate Countywide interests and impacts as defined by impacting a significant percentage of the population;
- include the categories of economic development, health and human services, public safety, technology, environment and cultural and civic engagement; and
- reflect data that is both reliable and available over the long-term.